

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA) announced today that he will serve as co-chair for the House of Representatives Sugar Caucus in 2007. Congressman Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) serves as the other chair of the caucus, which was created last year to help maintain a strong U.S. sugar policy in the upcoming Farm Bill. April 26, 2007

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**"Growing up in Assumption Parish, I've spent my whole life around sugarcane producers and know how hard they work to stay in business,"** said Rep. Melancon. **"I am proud to continue to advocate for them in Congress, and I will work with the Sugar Caucus to make sure sugar producers are protected when we draft the new Farm Bill."**

"Congressman Melancon has long been a champion for the state's sugar producers," said Jessie Breaux, a sugar farmer and president of the American Sugar Cane League. "And we're lucky to have him at the helm of the caucus. Having a strong group of legislators fighting for the sugar program will be key to the region's future."

"As Louisiana sugar farmers continue to rebuild after Katrina and Rita, we need to know that there is going to be a stable sugar market to come back to. And that means America's current no-cost sugar policy cannot be weakened," Breaux continued.

More than 27,000 Louisianans are employed by the state's \$1.7 billion sugar industry. Stable domestic sugar production and prices are necessary for our nation's food security since sugar-containing products account for more than 70% of all food manufacturing in the U.S.

Louisiana Reps. Alexander (R), Baker (R), Boustany (R), Jefferson (D), and Jindal (R) are also members of the caucus, which boasts 30 members.

A similar Senate Sweetener Caucus has been in existence for more than 15 years, and

Louisiana Sen. Mary Landrieu (D) is serving as one of the caucus' four chairmen in 2007. Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) is also a Sweetener Caucus member.

U.S. sugar policy has operated at no cost to America's taxpayers, which makes the program particularly appealing given current budget deficits. Supporters also tout the facts that sugar policy is critical to America's food security and that it keeps retail sugar prices affordable and stable.

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